

Statement of Congressman Ron Kind
H.Res.605, Recognizing the importance of increasing awareness of autism,
supporting programs for increased research and improved treatment of autism,
improving training and support for individuals with autism and those who care for
individuals with autism

May 5, 2004

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.Res.605, which recognizes the importance of increasing awareness of autism, advocates increased research, and pays tribute to those who care for individuals with autism.

More prevalent than Down syndrome, childhood cancer, and childhood diabetes combined, autism is a developmental disorder that is affecting a growing number of Americans. Studies show that one of every 250 babies born today will develop some form of autism. Individuals with autism face a wide array of biomedical and neurological difficulties, all of which result in a compromised immune system. The physical toll on children with autism is enormous, and the physical, emotional, and financial burden that parents of autistic children face is great. I have enormous respect for the parents, friends, and families of autistic children who sacrifice so much in order to care for their children.

Residents in my home state of Wisconsin are fortunate to have access to intensive in-home therapy with certified providers, and I applaud universities such as the University

of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, which is making great progress with its autism intervention program that trains students in autism behavior analysis and therapy. I believe we have a responsibility to aid colleges and universities that are doing such important work. I am also proud to be a member of the Congressional Coalition for Autism Research and Education, which seeks to educate members on the realities of autism and work to increase federal funding for autism research and services.

I have been fortunate during my years in Congress to meet with many parents of autistic children who continue to amaze me with the selfless work they do each day. Recently, I was able to spend some time at Willow River Elementary School in Hudson, Wisconsin, which has one of the highest rates of autistic children in the state. It was a pleasure to spend time with special education teachers who work so diligently with their students. The morning was a reminder of both the problems and promise autistic children have.

Mr. Speaker, we must work to better the situations of the children and families who live with autism on a daily basis. I commend Mr. Tierney and Mr. Burton for offering this important resolution and am pleased to be an original cosponsor. I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.